Sophia's Passion: Sant Mat and the Gnostic Myth of Creation

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Swami Shiv Dayal Singh Ji

The creation story of the Gnostics, as with all creation myths, is meant to answer the fundamental questions of our existence: where did we come from, where are we in the grand scheme of things, and why are we here? In this article we will discover how closely this mythic tale from the Middle East dating almost two thousand years, is paralleled by the creation stories of Kabir (d. mid-1500's) and Soami Ji (Swami Shiv Dayal Singh Ji Maharaj d. 1878) and his spiritual Master, Tulsi Saheb of Hathras (d.1843). These unique yet related mythologies are of great antiquity, having survived through long ages and various cultures and still resting near the center of a living spiritual tradition known as *Sant Mat*.

Tulsi Saheb

1) What is a Sant?

In order to provide an adequate context for what lies ahead, lets review some of the major features of the Sant Mat tradition. "Sant Mat" literally translates as the Path of the God-Realized. Although the term Sant is usually translated as "Master" or "Saint", the term "God-realized" is actually more precise, as this indeed is the specific meaning of the term Sant as used by the Spiritual Masters of this tradition. A Sant therefore, is defined as someone that has attained to the highest spiritual potential to which any human can aspire – complete self-knowledge and God-realization.

This spiritually transfigured being, is commissioned by his own Sat Guru, to function in the world as a living embodiment of the Godhead, a conscious co-worker of the Divine Plan, residing in all humility amongst humanity. His way is that of love, forgiveness and compassion. He teaches the necessity of individual spiritual

awakening through certain practices. He also promotes the cultivation of ethical virtues including strict vegetarianism, as an essential aspect of *ahimsa*, the virtue of non-violence.

One of the cardinal functions of a Sat Guru is to absolve through his own grace, sympathy and suffering, the accumulated *karma* of the spiritual aspirant. This general concept is identical to the Christian concept of the forgiveness of sins. The term *karma* refers to the apparently endless cycle of action begetting reaction that keeps the soul bound in creation, and is the engine of reincarnation, the wheel of birth and death. Without emptying the vessel of karmas accumulated through many, many lives, there can be no liberation, for the soul remains ever bound to the results of each thought, word or deed. At the end of life, the unfulfilled karmas become a part of the great storehouse that necessitates rebirth for their further expression. Therefore the *guru*, as the Word-made-flesh, entirely liberated from the chains of karma, plays a critical and central role in Sant Mat, and is regarded as an absolute prerequisite on the path of spiritual liberation.

2) The Spiritual Practices of Sant Mat

Sant Mat is also termed *Surat Shabd Yoga*, referring to the spiritual practices taught by the Sant: meditation on the inner spiritual light and divine music. This spiritual practice is based on the concept that creation emerges as a state of vibration having two fundamental aspects: Light and Sound, termed the God-Into-Expression power. *Naam* or Word in the Sant Mat tradition is the term for the expressive aspect of God as light and sound, the Word that was in the beginning. As it is written in the Gospel of John: "In the beginning was the Word, the Word was with God and the Word was God." It is regarded as the Holy Spirit of the triune Godhead that includes God, God's all-pervading power coming into manifest expression,

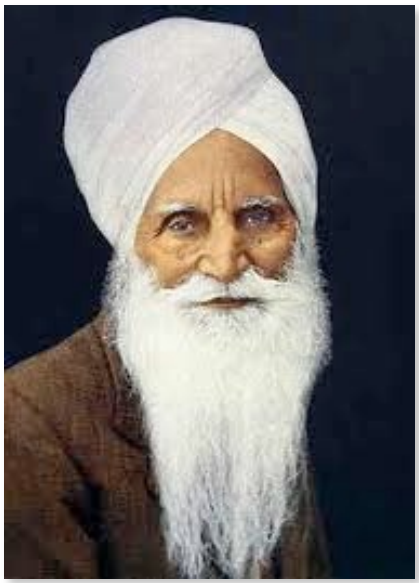
called Naam or the Holy Spirit, and the God-conscious Living Master, "The Word made flesh". The spiritual aspirant is guided into meditative contact with Naam or the Holy Spirit, in the form of spiritual Light and Sound, as these principles are the manifest form of the God-into-expression power.

The first method of spiritual meditation on practice involves the Ajna chakra or third eye, while repeating a mantra consisting of five names, given by the Spiritual Master. These five names relate to the five major divisions of creation and are imbued with the spiritual power of the Sant Sat Guru who has attained each of these stages. They are also said to confer protection on the inner spiritual planes as they are charged with the spiritual Master's life-impulse. Meditation at this chakra leads to the awakening of inner vision, revelations of light and the experience of transcending body consciousness. The second practice is meditation on the inner spiritual sound. This practice involves attunement within to inner sounds that are first heard on the right side, gradually coming from above, changing character at each stage and attaining the quality of dramatic musical tones. The sound is regarded as the supreme transcendental principle, capable of drawing the soul rapidly upward into the spiritual realms, burning the seeds of karma and leading to complete spiritual rebirth.

The practice of meditation on the Light and Sound principle and devotion to the "Word made flesh" Guru or Murshid, is regarded as the fundamental worship of Spirit. This structure can be traced through various schools of Sufism, through the ancient Upanishads of India (*Nad Bind Upanishad*), through the practices and references of the Pythagorans to the "Music of the Spheres" and in the Egyptian Book of the Dead itself. It can also be found in the writings of the Gnostics: "I cast a Sound into

the ears of those who know me. And I am inviting you into the exalted perfect Light." (*Trimorphic Protennoia*)

3) Sant Mat: A Direct Descendant of Near East Gnosticism?
Similarity of concepts and terminologies spanning thousands of years suggests the possibility that strains of what we term Near Eastern Gnosticism, its spiritual beliefs and practices, traveled west and east and survive today under different names and guises, distant branches of various ancient schools of gnostic thought. The master's of Sant Mat teach that their path has been maintained in its pristine character, unchanged and unchanging in its principles and practices, over great spans of time, as ancient as humanity itself. However, its outer expression and terminology has taken different forms according to the circumstances in which it finds itself in any given historical period.


Hazur Baba Sawan Singh Ji Maharaj

Sant Kirpal Singh Ji Maharaj, quoting Hazur Baba Sawan Singh in his biography of Hazur: "True Saints are not fastened to any religious sect or dress. They are free personalities. They are neither a party to one nor a foe to the other."

In other words the spiritual teaching is regarded as universal, not a distinct sect or cult, but a basic spiritual dharma or truth teaching that exists for the benefit all humanity regardless of their cultural/ religious background. Therefore, the Saints of the path are not tied to any place, time or religious identity, but adapt to the surrounding environment and circumstance.

4) Egypt, Gnosticism and the Advent of the Piscean Age
Gnosticism is a general term for a number of spiritual schools appearing in relationship or proximity to Christianity in the earliest period of Christian evolution. How did Gnosticism arise? Within the Egyptian temple orders, core esoteric knowledge and

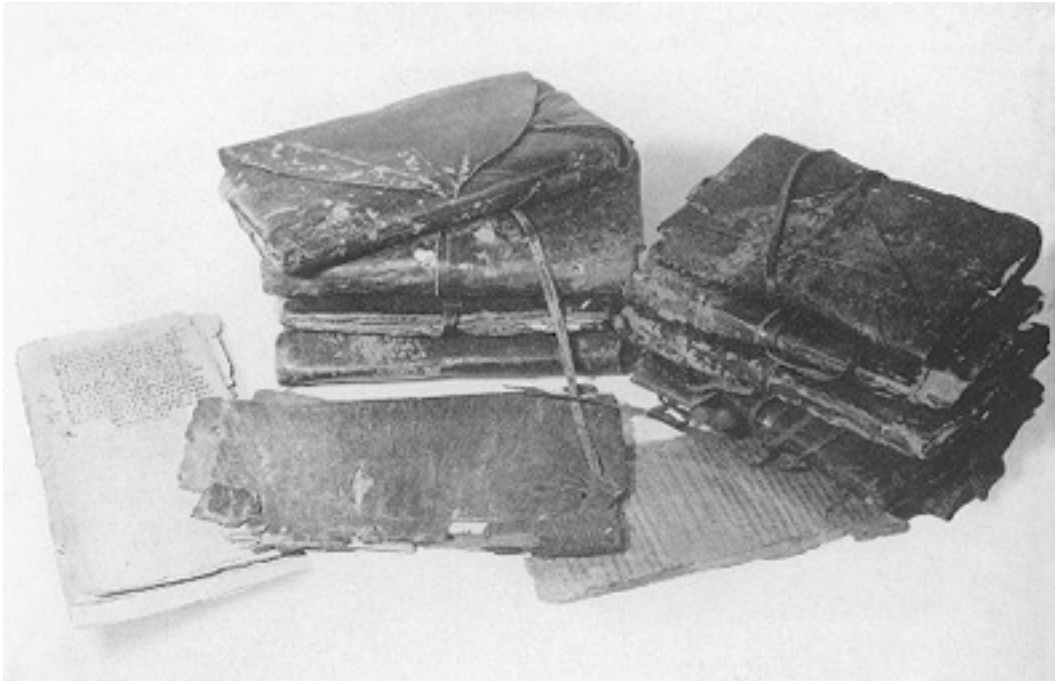
doctrines existed in a stable way over great spans of time. The gradual breakdown of the ancient Egyptian temple system accompanied the loss of Egyptian political power to a succession of ruling foreign states. This interaction of cultures, particularly with the Greeks and later the Romans, led to a diffusion of the beliefs, esoteric sciences and spiritual practices of the Egyptians and the resulting rise of numerous spiritual schools along an arc extending from the banks of the Nile, across the entire Mediterranean basin. This may be compared to the last four hundred years of Christian religious history where one enormous religious structure (Roman Catholicism) spawned hundreds.(1) For instance, Temples of the Egyptian Goddess Isis were common in Rome before the ascendance of Christianity and extended as far north as Switzerland

Around two thousand years ago, according to the procession of the equinoxes in the Great Platonic year, earth passed into the influence of the sign of Pisces, the fish. Along with this came the storied birth of Christ, who was the Fisher of Men, handed out loaves and fishes and walked on water. His apostles were chiefly fishermen, he is symbolized by a fish, and his mother's name, Mary, is related to Mara, an ancient Goddess of the sea. This occurred during the time of the gradual breakdown of the Egyptian temple system and the rise of Alexandria as the centre of spiritual and philosophic culture for the entire Mediterranean. It is difficult, Two thousand years later, to easily appreciate the many indications of deliberate design in the Christ myth and attendant scriptures. This is arguably, a restructuring of ancient, primarily Egyptian esoteric knowledge, given fresh coherence and identity more suited for the dawn of the age of Pisces.

5) Religion vs. Mysticism in Early Christianity

The common root of the various Gnostic schools was a mystic salvational path based on techniques for the achievement of direct personal spiritual experience. Gnosis is a term synonymous with the Sanskrit term *jnana*, and distinguishes direct spiritual realization from belief based on faith alone. As the Christian church grew and began to select, canonize, standardize, socialize and politicize its beliefs and doctrines, these mystic schools of Christian thought were increasingly viewed as heretical. Early church fathers such as Irenaeus and Hippolytus, wrote enormous volumes criticizing Gnostic thought, quoting extensively from Gnostic writings in order to refute their doctrines.

Over several centuries, the church gained political power, suppressed the Gnostics and systematically destroyed their works. The detailed polemics from orthodox Christian authors were, for the most part, the primary source of



information on the nature of Gnostic beliefs. It was only in the latter part of the nineteenth century that original Gnostic

Some of the Nag Hammadi Manuscripts

writings came to light. Then, in the early nineteen forties, the remains of an entire library of Gnostic literature was found by several shepherds, buried in an enormous urn near the village of Nag Hammadi in Egypt. Though at first being fed to the kitchen fire by the mother of the discoverer, someone fortunately recognized that it had the potential to buy far more fuel then it created.

6) The Captivity of Souls in Lower Creation

The esoteric spirituality of the Gnostics existed within the setting of a great cosmic drama in which humanity is held captive by a lower creator God who functions through the rule of law (i.e., karma), and seduces man into his false worship. Yahweh is one of the many names of this false God. The True God, on the other hand, is a transcendent and Unknowable Absolute whose realm is the true place of spiritual liberation.

Beyond these few common elements the theological response of the various Gnostic schools is diverse, ranging from the ascetic to the libertine. Nevertheless, the general theology, cosmology, and spiritual technique find many analogies with later and contemporary Sant Mat teachings. Gnostic concepts and methods such as the Five Names (2) or passwords, the Word or Sound that enlivens and sustains all creation, the Alien Man, i.e.,

the Sat Guru, who, though alien to this world, carries the message of the True God to the souls trapped in creation, are all central to Sant Mat teaching. (3)

7) The Story of Creation in Modern Sant Mat

The ancient creation myth of Sant Mat has found little place in the modern presentation of the teachings. In the desire to adapt to what we like to think of as a more rational era, this has been for the most part tucked away. (4) As with most of the great myths and fairy tales of the old world, story and allegory are meant to speak to the innermost recesses of the heart, mind and spirit. These are esoteric tales regarded as a symbolic/ mythic rendering of the actual process and structure of creation. Some of the chief characters such as Sat Purush (The True Form of God; Gnostic equivalent: The Only-Begotten) and the opposing force, the energy that gives rise to material form and rules the realms of karma, known as Kal (also: Dharam Rai or the Negative Power; Gnostic: Ialdabaoth, the Demiurge, etc.) are a very real presence in the discourses of the gurus of Sant Mat even today.

8) Formless God and the Eternal Realm of God's Attributes

God is conceived as having different phases that range from the Eternally Unmanifested Formless Absolute to the realm of Perfect and Eternal manifestation. This is termed Sach Khand (the True Realm) in Sant Mat, or the Pleroma (fullness) by the Gnostics, terms which are used interchangeably going forward. Its inhabitants are the Perfect, Eternal and Distinct constituent parts of the Divine Totality.

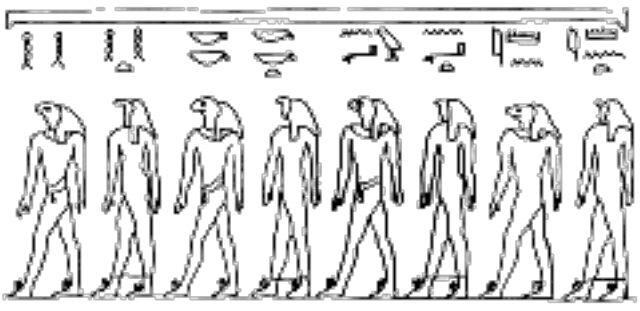
Sant Kirpal Singh has written, "In one there is always the delusion of many, and the totality does signify the existence therein of so many parts. The idea of a part and of the whole go cheek by jowl, and both the part as well as the whole are characterized by the similarity of the essential nature in them. The essence of a thing has its own attributive nature and the two cannot be separated from each other. Just as the essence is both one and many, so is the case with its attributive nature."(6)

One of the peculiar philosophic elements that unites both Sant Mat and Gnosticism, is the assertion that it is not given to the distinct (hypostatized) elements of the Godhead to have the experience of the Wholeness from which their distinction takes its value.(5) In other words, the Gods, right from the denizens of Sach Khand to the gods and angelic ministrants of the lower creation, cannot know the Unmanifest Absolute God, for they are cosmic archetypes, discreet expressions of the whole. The parts take their life from the whole, but they are not the whole.

Sant Kirpal Singh Ji Maharaj

This is the key and foundational element in the creation stories of both traditions, for in the resolution of this paradox is the essential purpose of creation itself. Again and again in his discourses, Sant Kirpal Singh, one of the greatest exponents of Sant Mat in the twentieth century, alighted on the comment that only human beings, of all creation, can realize God in all phases within their lifetime. Accordingly, the uniqueness of human existence is in the opportunity for reconciliation between the individual part and the unitary whole.

The cosmic attributes that exist as distinct entities in Sach Khand are known as the 'Sons of Sat Purush' in the East and the 'Aeons' in Gnosticism. Sat Purush, termed by the Gnostics, the Only-Begotten, is the Aeon that is, as it were, the Mind of the Absolute: pure consciousness and consciousness on all planes, thus also the bridge to creation proper. As Hans Jonas has written, "The Only-Begotten Mind alone, having issued from him directly, can know the Fore-Father: to all



the other Aeons he remains invisible and incomprehensible. 'It was a great marvel that they were in the Father without knowing Him.'"
(Gospel of Truth 22.27) (7)

The number of these eternal emanations of the formless absolute varies according to reference. The Gnostic version described by Hans Jonas gives four Aeons with their consorts to make eight, "the original Ogdoad", who then further elaborate to make another seven pairs for a total of thirty. The Kabiran version gives sixteen emanations with Sat Purush being the first; the Throne of God within the Kingdom of God.

9) Version One: The Part Desires Its Own Domain

The myths now run in two distinct and precisely opposite directions, at least in the Gnostic forms. The Kabiran version and one of the Gnostic versions states that there was an Aeon that cherished a desire for its own creation as an inherent part of its nature. We could say that the potential for separation from God is itself an Aeon. This leads ultimately to a creation existing in negative polarity with eternal Sach Khand, spinning the universes that exist in Time.

Kabir Saheb

This separative Aeon, known as Mind or Time (Kal), is Sat Purusha's first expansion in the Gnostic version and fifth in the Kabiran version. Kabir's Anurag Sagar states that "He is created from the most glorious part of the body of Sat Purush". Thus Sat Purush is linked to the "lower" creation, which eventually develops through Kal's activity. In this we are warned away from judging Kal as evil, and reminded that the generation of a lower creation is an expression of the Divine Will (Hukam).

In Soami Ji's version, Kal first emerges as a worrisome presence after all the other "Surats" had been elaborated. (Surat means

"attention". The term is synonymous with 'soul', but in a perfected sense as unalloyed consciousness.) Soami Ji tells us: "There appeared a dark colored current from the gate of the region of lotuses. This current appeared like a dark colored stone set in a white one and was absorbed in the Darshan of Sat Purush. All the Hansas (literally "Swans" – a term for pure souls) inquired of the Purush as to what the emanation was that they could not comprehend. The Purush replied, "Do not worry. Go on enjoying the bliss and happiness. This emanation will create a different spectacle." "Hansas were taken aback; they were unable to comprehend what this emanation was going to bring about. It was engaged in the service of Purush, but inwardly it cherished some other desire. That desire went on expanding. The emanation did not check it. By the Will of Purush, the emanation ventured to submit thus: 'I wish to bring about a separate dominion of my own. This creation of Yours, I like not. I wish to create three worlds and rule over them. I will then however engage myself in Your dhyan (contemplation).' The Purush turned out the Kala (the emanation). On being turned out, the Kala was in a great dread and alarm."(8)

The Kabiran version goes in a similar vein, wherein the Kala, termed Dharam Rai, also nurtures a desire for a separate creation. However, greater emphasis is laid on his long and continued devotions to Sat Purush, over vast spans of cosmic time, to which Sat Purush responds by giving him the means to fulfill his separative desire.(9)

In the Gnostic version of this myth quoted by Hippolytus, we find a very close reflection of Soami Ji and Kabir. However,

we first meet this Aeon, whose nature sets the stage for all subsequent creation, as a female form:
"Rushing up to the depth of the Father, she perceives that whereas all the begotten Aeons generate by copulation, the Father alone generates out of himself (being in this version without consort); in this she wants to emulate him and also generate out of herself without spouse, so that she may not fall short of the Father's achievement. She failed to perceive that this is the power solely of the Unbegotten One, and so she managed only to bring forth a formless entity."(10)

This then is the first version, prominent in both East and Near East, where a cosmic malcontents' desire for self-expression leads to separation and then to the lower creation. In all three version, the motive for separation is, as noted by Jonas, pure hubris.

10) Version Two: The Part Longs to Merge in the Whole

In the second Gnostic version, though the tale is structurally very similar in many respects, the motivation is exactly the opposite. Rather than a desire for separation there is a longing for union. Here the longing of the Aeon Sophia to know God completely, to merge in the Unmanifest Absolute, is the primary force that sets in motion the process that eventually leads to the development of the lower creation. We will now dwell on this intense and evocative tale at greater length.

So it was that: "The Aeons longed only secretly to behold the begetter of their seed and to search for the root without beginning." This longing is "the beginning of a crisis in the Pleroma"...since the Aeons "cannot forgo the aspiration to know more than their limits permit and thus to abolish the distance separating them from the Absolute. The last and youngest (and therefore outermost of the Aeons), the Sophia, leapt farthest forward and fell into a passion apart from the embrace of her consort."

“That passion had originated and spread from the vicinity of the Mind and Truth (again, a direct indication of the divine intentionality in the entire play - NT) but now infected the Sophia and broke out in her so that she went out of her mind, pretendedly from love, actually from folly or presumption, since she had no such community with the Father as the Only-Begotten Mind… The passion was a search for the Father, for she strove to comprehend his greatness. This, however, she failed to achieve, because what she attempted was impossible, and so she found herself in great agony. On account of the depth of the Abyss into which, in her desire, she penetrated more and more, she would in the end have been swallowed up by its sweetness and dissolved in the general being, had she not come up against the power that consolidates the All and keeps it off the ineffable Greatness. This power is called Limit. By him she was consolidated, brought back to herself, and convinced that the Father is incomprehensible. Thus she abandoned her previous intention and the passion engendered by it. These, however, now subsist by themselves as a 'formless entity.'”

Sophia's return to harmony in the Pleroma (Sach Khand) is, as noted by Jonas, “..the first restoration and salvation in the spiritual history of total being, and it occurs entirely inside the Pleroma, though as we shall see, it is the cause of a chain of events outside it.”

The image of what has taken place in the Pleroma itself indicates that the Aeon's longing, which will ‘later’ lead to the lower creation, is eternally latent, eternally activated, and eternally reconciled. In the meantime, 'the formless entity' created by Sophia’s passion, as we shall see, becomes the basis of all subsequent creation outside the Pleroma.

11) Creation Born of Sophia’s Passion

Once the “integrity of the Pleroma” had been restored and Sophia rejoined to her consort, she contemplated on her fate and the 'formless entity' to which her passion has given birth. This gives rise to various passionate emotions, which also become embodied

in the formless. The emotions evoked vary according to different Gnostic authors, but include grief, fear, bewilderment, shock, and repentance. A lesser Aeon is then created out of the admixture of the Sophia's longing for union, along with her emotions in the wake of her failure.

The residue of this disturbance in the Pleroma "has become hypostatized as a positive realm by itself. Only at this price could the Pleroma be rid of it. Thus the Limit ("which separates the Aeons from the unbegotten Father" above and the 'formless entity', soon to be below - NT) was not planned in the original constitution of the Fullness, i.e., of the free and adequate self-expression of the godhead, but was necessitated by the crisis as a principle of consolidation and protective separation."

This is important since both here and in the Eastern version we see emphasized the idea of creation wholly unrelated to the natural perfection of the Pleroma, yet paradoxically percolating from within it.

12) The Differing Roles of Christos and Jesus

"As ignorance and formlessness (the residual, unformed energy created by Sophia's Passion - NT) had appeared within the Pleroma, deep perturbation remained among the Aeons, who no longer felt safe, fearing like happenings to themselves." A collective prayer to

the Father invokes a new pair of Aeons whose purpose is to restore true serenity to the Pleroma and take care of the residual formlessness. These are Christos and Holy Spirit. The Christos imparts to the Aeons knowledge of their relationship to the Father that leads them to perfect repose. "As a fruit of their new unity, they all together, each contributing the best of his essence, produce an additional (and unpaired) Aeon, Jesus, in whom the Fullness is, as it were, gathered together and the regained unity of the Aeons symbolized. This 'perfect fruit of the Pleroma,' who contains all its elements, has later, as Savior, to carry in his person the Fullness out into the Void, in which the residue of the past disturbance, meanwhile delimited by Christos, still awaits salvation."

Here we find a reflection at the level of the Pleroma of the maintaining function (Christos) distinguished from the salvational function (Jesus). This is similar to the distinction in Sant Mat between an Avatar and a Sant. In the theology of Sant Mat, an Avatar is a Divine incarnation of the Negative Power, the lower creator Lord, whose purpose is to stabilize and maintain creation by advancing spiritual principles. The Sant Sat Guru, as the incarnation of the Sat Purush carrying "the Fullness out into the void", brings deliverance to the souls enmeshed in creation. "The incarnations of the Positive Power, the Saints, look after the souls and take them back to God." (11)

13) Grief, Fear, Bewilderment, Ignorance and The Turning

The Desire of the Sophia, now separated as an entity unto itself, is called the Achamoth or the lower Sophia. Together with the Passions, she is cast "outside"" the Pleroma. Energized by the Christos reaching out from the Pleroma, she is left "with the awakened awareness of her separation from the Pleroma and the aroused longing for it. This initiates a redemptional task whose accomplishment requires a long detour of suffering and successive divine interventions." In other words lower creation now becomes an inevitable development, yet paradoxically essential for the higher purpose of reconciliation.

"The deserted Sophia impetuously sets out to seek after the vanished light, but cannot reach it, for the Limit obstructs her forward rush. She cannot penetrate through him, because of her admixture of the original Passion, and forced to remain alone in the outer darkness she falls prey to every kind of suffering that exists. In this she repeats on her own level the scale of emotions which her mother in the Pleroma underwent, the only difference being that these passions now pass over into the form of definitive states of being, and as such they can become the substance of the world ... grief, because she could not get hold of the light; fear, lest besides the light also life might leave her; bewilderment, added to these; and all of them united in the basic quality of ignorance (itself counted as an 'affection'). And still another state of mind ensued: the turning (conversion) toward the Giver of Life."

This then is the foundation of creation, the endless admixture of the four "negative" emotions and the underlying positive element of longing for the Source. The four represent the Negative Power in its definitive form as a force going into expression or manifestation. The turning, on the other hand, is the salvational aspect, the longing that is the source of all prayer and spiritual effort within creation. This is also known in Sant Mat as 'bireh', the intense anguish of separation, which has given the world so much exquisite spiritual literature.

The opening of Rumi's famous 13th century *Masnavi*:

"Listen to the reed and the tale it tells,
how it sings of separation:
Ever since they cut me from the reed bed,
my wail has caused men and women to weep.
I want a heart that is torn open with longing
so that I might share the pain of this love.
Whoever has been parted from his source
longs to return to that state of union.

- Helminski translation 1998

14) The Further Genesis of Creation

In the next act, the Achamoth is herself "detached" from the passions she has generated by the intervention from the Pleroma of "the common fruit", i.e., Jesus. Through "Jesus" she is drawn into a higher consciousness and thus a greater awareness of her position.

Oddly enough, now we find the lower Sophia building on the energy of 'turning back' to generate a son, the Demiurge, through whom further creation proceeds. Does it not at first seem strange that at this stage the force of longing gives even greater impulse to the movement away from the Pleroma? Here we have another hint that the generation of the lower worlds is related to the desire to return to the Source.

15) Ialdabaoth: The False God That Enslaves Humanity

We will come back to this point, but in the meantime much is made of the essential ignorance of the Demiurge which leads him to declare himself to be the "unique and highest God". "Ialdabaoth was boastful and arrogant, and exclaimed: 'I am Father and God, and beyond me is none other.'"(12) However, the processes he sets in motion, believing them to be his own, are in fact, fashioned by his mother. In this it is again suggested that no matter how 'fallen' creation ultimately becomes, the entire process is an expression of Divine Will.

The polarity between an ignorant creator God well removed from even his Mother, and a far distant Eternity of Consciousness, i.e., the True God, is at the center of Gnostic and Sant Mat theology. Soami Ji repeatedly asserts, as did the Gnostics, that the God of the various world religions is none other then Kal, the Negative Power, the Demiurge; and more likely one of his provincial expansions, the lower creator lords. Therefore, his worship is false and leads to ever-greater enmeshment rather than true liberation. "I do not abide in the three worlds. Only a drop of my ocean-like form is here. All the religions prevalent in the world speak and talk of this drop as (if it were) the ocean." (13)

The Demiurge - Creator of the World

16) Salvation by the Common Fruit of the Pleroma: Jesus

The Achamoth, the lower Sophia, leads the Demiurge into the knowledge of what is above him; "However, he keeps to himself the great mystery of the Father and the Aeons into which the Sophia has initiated him and divulges it to none of his prophets." Imparting knowledge of the Father to the lower creation itself is left to "the incarnation of the Aeons Jesus and Christos from the Pleroma in the person of the historical Jesus." This, at least, is an interpretation of the Valentinian perspective, that being the Christian Gnostic tradition from which this story is derived. However, the extension of this concept in other Gnostic circles and so essential to Sant Mat, is that the incarnation in the world of "the common fruit" of the Pleroma, to bring salvation to the lower creation, is a perpetual manifestation somehow essential to the structure of the world. In other words, there is always a living manifestation of the Sat Purush.

In this conception, the Sant Sat Guru, or Word-Made-Flesh, is

ever present in the world, not a periodic incarnation as with Vishnu of Hinduism who has several incarnations, or an incarnation that appears once in history and then again at the end of time, returning as judge and savior, as in the Christian conception.

Though we have skipped various steps and details for which the reader is invited to review Hans Jonas's writings or the original works such as the Gospel of Truth as found in the Nag Hammadi collection, we are ready to proceed to the position of humanity in this total process.

The Snake of Wisdom

17) Primal Humanity Cast Out by Ialdabaoth

Unwittingly, the Demiurge, also known as Ialdabaoth, is led to the creation of God-like, yet innocent primal humanity but leaves them in ignorance of their true origin and potential. His mother, the lower Sophia, intervenes, working through the snake of wisdom to impart Adam and Eve with gnosis, the spiritual knowledge of their true station.

Seeing this awakened state, the jealous and angry Demiurge casts Adam and Eve farther into matter, where human nature recapitulates the passions and longing of its

high progenitors. This is the tale of Adam and Eve turned on its head. The first children are banished, not by God, but by the Demiurge, who is an impostor, a false God. He draws their worship of God unto himself, prescribing rules, practices and scriptures that misdirect the seeker and do not confer spiritual liberation.

Despite the jealous machinations of the Demiurge, or Kal in the East, these strangely similar mystic spiritual traditions proclaim that it is the destiny of humanity to be the receptacle of the highest mysteries, transcending even their captors.

"...Listen to me, the Sound of the Mother of your mercy, for you have become worthy of the mystery hidden from the Aeons.." (Trimorphic Protennoia Nag Hammadi Library p.467)

"Behold, Zostrianos, you have heard all these things of which the gods are ignorant..."
(Zostrianos Nag Hammadi Library p.392)

18) Sophia's Longing Fulfilled

According to the Gnostics, a passion for salvation from the bondage of Time and communion with the Divine Source, reflects and proceeds from the original passion for mergence in the Absolute God of the primal Sophia, which necessitated creation in the first place. Furthermore: "Since Oblivion (the lower world) came into existence because they (the Aeons) did not know the Father, therefore if they (i.e., the spiritual seekers - NT) attain to a knowledge of the Father, Oblivion becomes at that very instant nonexistent." (Gospel of Truth 18. 7-14). Again, that "knowledge" is not information but direct *gnosis*, i.e., spiritual experience.

"..Nor was there ever an "original sin" of man, a guilt of the human soul: there was, instead… a divine upheaval, whose reparation in its course required the creation of the world and that of man. Thus the world, unbeknown to its immediate author, is for the sake of salvation, not salvation for the sake of what

happened within creation and to creation.” (14)

To restate for the sake of driving home the elegance of this vision: In Gnostic theology there is no primal act, such as Eve's so-called sin against God’s commandment (by eating the proverbial forbidden apple), for which, all of humanity collectively partakes in guilt, and for which salvation exists as a path to restoration, as according to Christian doctrine.

Indeed, true gnosis is not the reconciliation of God and his rebellious creation, but in the poignant metaphor of the Gnostics, the vicarious fulfillment of the longing of the eternal Aeons to merge in the Absolute. In this noble vision, creation is a bridge extending from the Absolute Nameless realms all the way to the dark density of matter. The long journey out into Time and Mind generates a path of return transcending all limiting attributes and merging in the undifferentiated Source. In this way, vicariously, the original longing of the Sophia is fulfilled.

19) The Sat Guru Embodies Eternal Longing & Eternal Union

The veil of time and the destruction of the majority of gnostic scripture and literature leaves us very little information about discipleship, mastership and lineage in the gnostic traditions.

The belief in the transmission of spirituality from generation to generation through a succession of God-realized living spiritual masters, is in some respects, one of the most fascinating assertions of the tradition. Paradoxically, it seems to be far easier for humanity to have faith in an almost mythical ancient personage than in a living incarnation. A living master fulfills a variety of roles as described in part one. The living master embodies and authenticates the potential that he claims exists in every human being, the possibility of complete spiritual awakening. Importantly, it is only the living spiritual master who can preserve the integrity of the spiritual teaching in every generation. An imperfect apostle will unwittingly interpose his own limited understanding.

Yet with all that we know little of the dynamics of the succession process that could forge such a potent ideal into a remarkable reality, though there are hints and suggestions. Furthermore, different schools profess quite different views on succession, each with implications that can dramatically affect and alter our overall understanding of the nature of the spiritual path. (15)

Through the story of Sophia's passion we can infer another aspect of the mystery of the Sat Guru in Sant Mat. Before he is Sat Guru, he is a *gurmukh*, the wholly empty vessel, empty of separative ego, the perfected disciple. He is immersed in the blissful *darshan* of the Sat Guru physically as well as on the spiritual planes. With the passing of the physical Master, the perfect disciple loses this absolute of gifts. Yet in the transfiguration wrought of both grief and ecstasy, the last vestiges of the separative self are burnt away, and he is now gazing through the eyes he formerly looked into:

"In Your Absence, where is the once blooming and ecstatic state of my heart? I'm afraid lest the secret of our love may now be disclosed. Otherwise, who knew this hidden tale besides You."
- Translation of a portion a poem by Sant Kirpal Singh ji Maharaj on the passing of Baba Sawan Singh (16)

To this irreparable loss, as with Sophia, he responds with an unbroken longing, a longing that cannot be fulfilled, except vicariously through his own *gurmukh* disciple. Baba Sawan Singh once said, "If my Sat Guru would come and give me darshan even for a minute, I would gladly give away everything I have."(16)

Thus we are led to understand that the Sat Guru embodies the eternal nature of longing, the cause of creation itself, just as he also manifests the eternity of love and perfect union with the Beloved that is the fulfillment of all longing.

Footnotes

1) One must not forget that by the time of the Christian era, the Egyptian civilization had maintained a more or less consistent structure for at least three thousand years. Yet, despite this, the deeply foreign appearance of Egyptian religious symbolism led to a history that eulogized the Greeks as the ancient source of modern Western culture. It would be more accurate to regard Greek civilization as a bridge to modernity, in that we eventually see the breakdown of enchantment, the emergence of doubt, and the rise of rationalism. Along with this, the forms of art and literature of the Greeks are more accessible to the modern eye and mind.

Nevertheless, most of the great Greeks, as one voice, point to Egypt as the source of their knowledge and mysteries. A tour through the National Archaeological Museum in Athens followed by a journey to the major antiquities museum in Cairo is most revealing. After fulfilling this task in 1987, it is this writer's opinion that the Greek antiquities, for all their beauty and elegance, appear almost trivial and derivative by comparison to the majesty of ancient Egyptian statuary and art.

The last active Egyptian temple was the temple of Isis on the island of Philae, about six hundred miles south of modern Cairo. The Christian Romans shut down the temple of Philae around 400 C.E, though it remains one of the most beautiful monuments of ancient Egypt even today. It is a fact that there were cults of the Egyptian Goddess, Isis, all along the Mediterranean, holding much influence in Rome and penetrating deeply into France and as far north as Switzerland (See *The Golden Ass*, Lucius Apuleus, written around 400 C.E.). The impress of cult of Isis can be directly

related to the gradual rise of Mary as a figure of unique importance in the Church.

As for Judaism, the fundamental Hebraic corpus of esoteric knowledge known as Kaballah must certainly have been born from Egypt. The Ka and the Ba in the term Kaballah are the spirit and the soul respectively in Egyptian terminology. The linguistic structure of Jewish and Christian scripture and the basic Christian story rely heavily on initiatic knowledge and mythic allegory derived from Egypt. Books that have been influential in my own research include *The Dimensions of Paradise*, Harper and Row, 1988 or its original edition titled *The City of Revelation*, Garnstone Press 1971 (out of print) both by John Michell. Also *Mystery Religions of the Ancient World*, by Jocelyn Godwin, Harper and Row, 1981; *The Egyptian Mysteries* Arthur Versluis, Arkana Books 1988; *The Apostolic Gnosis*, Thorsons Publishers, 1979 (First edition 1919), *The Temple In Man*, R.A. Schwaller de Lubicz, Inner Traditions Intl., 1977 (First edition 1949), *Serpent in the Sky: The High Wisdom of Ancient Egypt*, John Anthony West, Quest Books, 1993 (First Edition 1979), among many others.

2) The Five Names are the names of the Lords of the inner divisions of creation. The repetition of these names serves to carry the life impulse of the one who has conveyed them, that is to say, the Master or *the "Alien man"* as the Master was termed by the Gnostics. They act as passwords and protection against the Archonic lower powers. "He who possesses the Five Seals of these particular names has stripped off the garments of ignorance and put on a shining Light! And nothing will appear to him that belongs to the Powers of the Archons... And I proclaimed to them the Five Seals in order that I might abide in them and they also might abide in me." (*The Trimorphic Protennoia*, The Nag Hammadi Library, page 470.)

"Repeat the Five Names and fix your surat (attention) in the illumined darkness within" (*Sar Bachan Poetry* XXVI, as

translated by R.K.Khanna in *Truth Eternal*, a privately published book from 1963).

"...They are charged with a tremendous spiritual power which negative powers can hardly put up with and from which they flee as from an enchanter driven. Immortal and everlasting as these words of the Master are, they bestow life everlasting to the soul in which they sink and take root." (Kirpal Singh, *Way of the Saints*, page 110, Sant Bani Press, 1975) "There are five planes and the Names given are according to these planes, one by one." Sant Kirpal Singh, Sat Sandesh, from the discourse "Five Dacoits Are Looting."

3) See "*The Trimorphic Protennoia*" from The Nag Hammadi Library ed. James M. Robinson Harper & Row, 1981, pp.461-4. The meeting of cosmic metaphor and esoteric technique, of both gnosticism and Sant Mat, is found in this revelation poem more plainly than in any other gnostic document. However, one significant point here is that the speaker, the Protennoia, or Primal Thought, who also identifies herself with the creative Sound, is feminine. This though is quite consistent with gender metaphor in much metaphysical literature where the 'male' principle is the seed, or otherwise the Uncreated aspect, whereas all that brings creation into being is 'female'. Since Naam, the Word, or the Sound Current is regarded as the substratum of creation, it too is spoken of in some gnostic literature as female. She says, "I cast a Sound into the ears of those who know me. And I am inviting you into the exalted perfect Light."

An essay on the relationship between The Trimorphic Protennoia and Sant Mat titled, *The Gnostic Universe: Connecting Ancient and Modern Mysticism*, was written by Katherine Grace and published in 1988 in Prof. David Lane's now defunct research journal, *Understanding Cults and Spiritual Movements*. This is the only other discussion of the connection with which I am familiar.

4) The major exception is the publication of the first English translation of Kabir's *Anurag Sagar* by the Sant Bani group.

Russell Perkins offers an extensive commentary in which he mentions Gnostic and other connections to the Kabiran myth. In several published talks, Perkins has commented on this myth of the Gnostics, as well as similar ideas in the writings of William Blake, who specifically drew a distinction between God the artificer, the Lord of Time and Space as it were, and the True God of Eternity. Sant Darshan Singh periodically recounted Kabir's tale of the "three boons" given to Kal (the Negative Power) by Sat Purush (God) in order to help preserve the lower creation.

5) "hy-pos-ta-sis: Gr. hypostatis, substance, nature, essence. A phenomenon or state of things conceived of as a real substance. One of the...real and distinct subsistences in the one undivided substance or essence of God." - from *New Webster's Dictionary*.

6) *The Crown of Life* Kirpal Singh Sat Sandesh Books Franklin New Hampshire 1974 p.10

7) *The Gnostic Religion,* Hans Jonas Beacon Press Boston 1963, Page 181. Enough praise cannot be heaped upon this brilliant volume which, despite the many books that have been written since, and the great developments of scholarship in the field, still remains one of the most succinct and coherent discussions of essential Gnostic doctrines. Without the aid of the *Nag Hammadi* texts or an esoteric training, Jonas was able to put together a vivid interpretation that plainly echoes Sant Mat principles in detail. It is also beautifully written in an elegant and fluid prose particularly marvelous for the fact that Jonas was not a native English speaker.

8) *Sar Bachan Radhasoami* (*Poetry*) Part 2, Soamiji Maharaj translated and published by S.D. Maheshwari Soami Bagh Agra 1970 pp.428-429 These volumes were originally published in Hindi ten to twenty years after the passing of Soami Ji. Although they contain many writings from the discourses of Soami Ji, Rai Saligram added couplets at the

end of many verses and dozens of his own devotional verses. Unfortunately these are integrated in the text to an extent that makes it difficult to differentiate them.

9) *The Ocean of Love: the Anurag Sagar* of Kabir
Sant Bani Ashram, New Hampshire, 1984.
The *Anurag Sagar* has a most interesting history in the line of Masters from Tulsi Saheb onwards. One of the few English translations of Tulsi Saheb's writings is a long interpretation of aspects of this text (*Param Sant Tulsi Saheb* Soami Bagh, Agra 1979). *Anurag Sagar* was recommended to Baba Sawan Singh by Baba Jaimal Singh at their first several meetings. Baba Sawan Singh referred to this book in glowing terms, saying that it was essential for understanding the difference between the "Negative Power," as Kal is referred to, and the path of the Saints. Nevertheless, scholars contest the authenticity of the volume, stating that it is a later work of the Kabir Panth, a religious sect loosely based on Kabir's writings. nYet, in so many respects, it accords very closely with Sant Mat as taught by Tulsi, Soami Ji and his successors, giving it a ring of authenticity that defies the opinion of scholars.

10) *The Gnostic Religion* ibid footnote p. 151 All unreferenced quotes are from this text.

11) *A Very Intricate Matter* Kirpal Singh Sant Bani Magazine Feb. 1978 page 17. This was a radio interview with Kirpal Singh in Mexico City in 1972 in which he was asked about the devil. His insistent reply, in which he swept aside the interviewers attempts to change the subject, was a potent discourse on the nature and function of the Positive vs. the Negative Powers. In essence he focuses on the fact that both ultimately function under God serving essential though polarized roles.

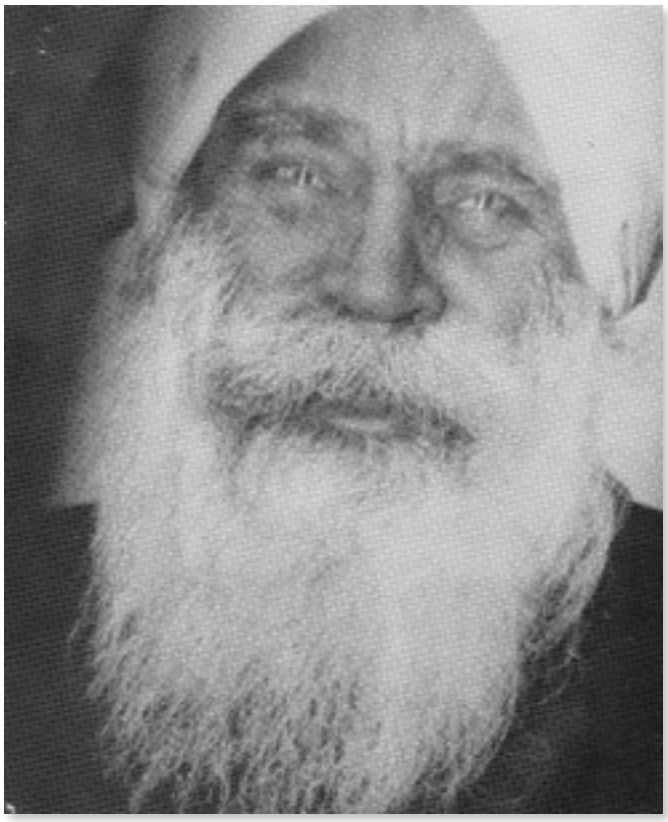
12) *Fragments of a Faith Forgotten,* G.R.S. Mead New York University Books, 1960, p.188.

13) *Sar Bachan Radhasoami* (*Poetry*), Ibid p.94-101. Also, *Portrait of Perfection,* Ibid page 46.

14) *The Gnostic Religion* ibid p. 196

15) Quoted from *Sariya Duniya* in the magazine Sat Sandesh, July 1971, p.17.

16) The issue of succession and its dynamics, are the entire subject of my paper: *Crisis and Renewal: Succession in Modern Sant Mat*.



Dedicated to Sant Kirpal Singh Ji Maharaj - The Lion of Mercy